



CABINET: 12 September 2017

Report of: Director of Development and Regeneration

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Hodson

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SUBJECT: LOCAL PLAN REVIEW UPDATE

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek approval for an updated Local Development Scheme, reflecting a slightly amended timetable for the Local Plan Review, and to seek approval for additional funding for evidence base studies that are necessary to inform the Local Plan Review.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Local Development Scheme attached at Appendix A be approved for publication.

2.2 That funding of £50,000 be approved from the Major Projects Reserve to fund additional evidence base studies required to inform the Local Plan Review.

3.0 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW UPDATE

3.1 The Local Plan Review, approved by Cabinet in September 2016, has progressed well through the first 12 months of the timetable, with only a small delay in the publication of the Issues & Options Papers in March 2017 and the successful completion of the public consultation on those Issues & Options Papers. Officers are now working on the preparation of the Preferred Options for a new Local Plan, with regular input from the Local Plan Cabinet Working Group.

- 3.2 To account for knock-on effects of the small delay in the publication of the Issues & Options Papers and to allow a little more time to prepare the Preferred Options, the timetable for the Local Plan Review has been updated. The timetable is incorporated into the Local Development Scheme, a document which the Council are required to prepare and publish regularly in order to keep it up-to-date and to enable members of the public and interested parties to see the progress on the Local Plan Review.
- 3.3 As such, an updated Local Development Scheme has been prepared (see Appendix A) and Cabinet are asked to approve this for publication at recommendation 2.1 above.

4.0 EVIDENCE BASE STUDIES

- 4.1 A key part of this stage of the Local Plan Review (preparing the Preferred Options) is the preparation of evidence base studies which can then inform the direction policies, or the Local Plan as a whole, take on certain issues. The list of evidence needed to support a Local Plan Review is wide-ranging and extensive and is made up of three broad types:
- Analysis and interpretation of data that is already available to the Council;
 - Studies which Council officers have the expertise to undertake and for which it is a wise use of Council resources to use officers to undertake; and
 - Studies which require expertise that the Council does not have or for which it is more cost-effective to use external support.
- 4.2 Council officers carried out much of the analysis and interpretation of available data (mainly Census data and other ONS statistics) prior to the preparation of the Issues & Options Papers and, indeed, this evidence directly informed the identification of issues that the Local Plan Review might address. Council officers have carried out, and continue to carry out, several studies "in-house" that will form key elements of the evidence base of the Local Plan Review. These include the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).
- 4.3 In relation to those studies which the Council must seek external, consultancy support on, the Development and Regeneration Service has a small budget for the costs of utilising consultancy expertise, publicity and promotion, and external printing services necessary to prepare a Local Plan and other planning policy related documents. Ordinarily, this budget is sufficient to cover annual costs associated with the above services, but, given the large number of evidence studies that need to be prepared in a short space of time over the financial year 2017/18, the Council needs to spend more on consultancy services to ensure the necessary evidence is prepared in time to support the preparation of the Preferred Options.
- 4.4 The Development and Regeneration Service's revenue budget allocated £44,000 to consultancy, publicity and promotion, and printing costs for the Local Plan review in 2017/18. A similar annual budget has been assigned in the previous

two years but this is a reduced figure compared to the preparation of the last Local Plan given that, in between the preparation of Local Plans, the full budget was not always being fully utilised. In addition to this £44,000 budget, Council agreed in July 2017 that £15,600 of unspent funding should be rolled forward from 2016/17, giving a total of £59,600 available to spend this year.

4.5 Thus far, this budget has been allocated to the following evidence base studies:

- Housing Requirement Policy-on Scenarios
- Affordable and Specialist Housing Needs Study
- Traveller Needs Assessment
- Retail and Commercial Leisure Study
- Playing Pitch Strategy Review

4.6 However, the Council still needs to commission several more studies in 2017/18, including:

- Open Space Study (estimated cost £25,000)
- Traffic Impact Assessment for the Local Plan Preferred Options (costs to be shared with Highways England) (estimated cost £20,000)
- Renewable Energy Study (possibility this would be a joint study with LCR authorities) (estimated cost £15,000)
- Further joint work with LCR authorities to follow-on from the SHELMA (estimated cost £9,000)

4.7 These will cost substantially more than the remaining budget and so Cabinet are asked to agree that £50,000 of Reserves be used to enable these essential studies to be commissioned in 2017/18 and so inform the preparation of the Local Plan Preferred Options.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

5.1 While there are no direct implications for sustainability or the community strategy of the recommendations Cabinet are being asked to consider in this report, the outcome of a Local Plan Review (i.e. a new Local Plan) clearly will have implications for sustainability and the community strategy, but it is impossible to predict what those may be at this very early stage.

5.2 However, the Council are required to prepare a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Local Plan as it progresses through preparation, with the SA directly informing the policy formulation of the Local Plan, and so the issue of sustainability will be directly addressed and the principle of sustainable will necessarily run through the Local Plan as a key guiding principle (or golden thread, as the NPPF calls it).

6.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 It is anticipated that costs associated with the Local Plan Review and the preparation of the new Local Plan will be met from existing budget provisions of the Development and Regeneration Service, aside from the additional budget

requested in this report for further consultancy support on evidence base studies. However, the Examination of the Local Plan, once it has been prepared and submitted for Examination, will be a significant separate cost that will require additional funding and will form part of a budget growth bid for 2019/20.

7.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The primary risk associated with the above recommendations would be the delay in the preparation of the Local Plan Review should additional funding not be allocated to the preparation of evidence studies as it would be unwise to publish Preferred Options for the Local Plan without a full set of evidence base studies.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision Cabinet are being asked to make is simply related to the publication of the Local Development Scheme (essentially a timetable and project plan for the Local Plan Review) and the provision of Council funds to allow the preparation of additional evidence required for the Local Plan Review and so there is no direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore, an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

Appendices

Appendix A – Local Development Scheme (September 2017)